

Cultural homophily:
the preference
for same culture
language in online
dating profile texts.

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Study overview

Online dating

2nd most likely way to meet someone new.

A third of new couples now meet online.

Important to look at how we present ourselves and are perceived.

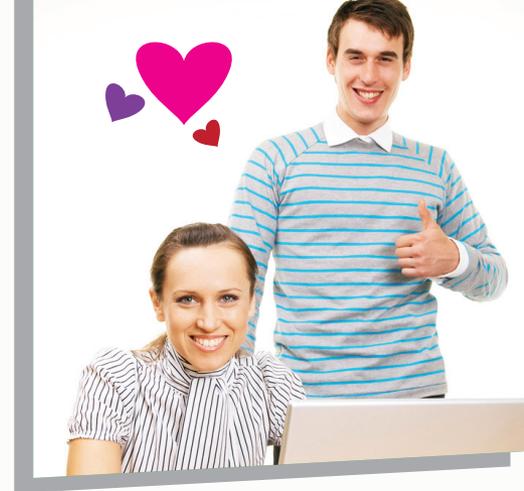
“About Me” free text (Fiore, Taylor, Mendelsohn, & Hearst, 2008; Toma, 2010).

2nd most important profile element after photograph in judging attraction and trustworthiness.

This study:

Irish and American profile texts and participants.

If a profile text contains typical language variables of a culture – is the text more attractive to members of that culture than those outside the culture?



Homophily

Homophily

Homophily is the tendency to bond with people like ourselves.

Homophily in online dating (Fiore & Donath, 2005; Fiore et al., 2010; Hitsch et al., 2010; Norton et al., 2007).

- ➔ daters prefer others with similar demographic and life course attributes.
 - ➔ appears more in their actions (contacting) than their stated preferences.
 - ➔ limited research for homophily & personality.
 - ➔ shared traits increases liking, dissimilar traits decreases liking.
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Culture & language

Cultural differences: what kind? (Lester, 2000; van Hemert, van de Vijver, Poortinga, & Georgas, 2002).

Neuroticism: Irish = Americans.

Extraversion: Americans > Irish.

Psychoticism: Irish > Americans.

Lie Scale: Americans > Irish.

Language (Kirby, Dowman, & Griffiths, 2007)

Language differences arise from cultural transmission, alongside biological evolution and individual learning.

Language analysis → **traits** (Chung & Pennebaker, 2008; Fiore et al. 2010)

Personality traits – embedded and expressed linguistically.

RQ & hypothesis

Research Question: Assuming an embedded **cultural and personality difference** in the **language used** by Irish and American daters, is that language more attractive to people **within that culture** than outside of it?

Hypothesis 1: Irish people will find Irish profiles more attractive than American profiles.

Hypothesis 2: American people will find American profiles more attractive than Irish profiles.



Methodology

Participants

61 Irish | 59 American.

Irish & American heterosexual females, over 18.

Materials (LIWC - Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count)

5 sample profiles created with culturally typical language.

- ➔ based on analysis of 150 Irish & 150 American profile texts (LIWC).
 - ➔ 2 positive profiles – 1 Irish, 1 American.
 - ➔ 1 mixed profile with Irish and American language.
 - ➔ 2 slightly negative profiles – 1 Irish, 1 American.
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Procedure for each sample text

Rated: the attractiveness of the profile texts on a likert scale.

Answered: Would you respond to a communication from the author of this profile on a dating site?



Results

Ratings for attractiveness

Irish Ranking of Profiles					
Rank	Profile type	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
1	Irish – positive	61	4.0328	.91227	.11680
2	Mix Irish/USA	61	3.8525	1.07759	.13797
3	USA – positive	60	3.7500	1.00212	.12937
4	Irish – negative	61	3.5410	.97594	.12496
5	USA – negative	59	2.7288	1.22939	.16005

American Ranking of Profiles					
Rank	Profile type	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
1	USA – positive	59	4.2542	.97544	.12699
2	Mix Irish/USA	57	4.0702	.90356	.11968
3	Irish – positive	59	3.9322	.94439	.12295
4	Irish – negative	58	3.3103	1.28701	.16899
5	USA – negative	58	2.4655	1.14272	.15005

The Irish preferred

Irish positive profiles, followed by the mixed profile.

Americans preferred

American positive profiles, followed by the mixed profile.

Negative profiles

The Irish rated both negative profiles higher than USA.

Contact question

Matched rankings except, Americans answered yes to positive Irish profile more than the Irish.

Discussion

Support for hypotheses

Irish participants preferred Irish positive profiles.

American participants preferred American positive profiles.

Scores on the negative profiles

Irish participants rated both negative profiles higher than Americans

American's higher in agreeableness - agreeable profiles more successful?

A positive profile is more important than the same cultural language.

Contact question

Agreeableness may have affected scores.

Americans answered yes to all positive profiles more than Irish.

Irish answered yes to negative profiles more.

Limitations

Limitations of the study

- Only Caucasian, heterosexual, male profiles, and Caucasian, heterosexual, female participants. It would be of benefit to extend this research to a larger cohort, and across genders and sexual persuasion.
 - Manipulated profiles may not be the best way to test hypothesis.
 - Limited sample profile texts.
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Implications

It is possible that language cues indicating personality or culture may be unconsciously or consciously picked up by readers of the profiles, and this may account for the ratings of attractiveness.
